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WORLD PREMIERE OF DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM’S NEW BALLET “PASSAGE” COMMEMORATES THE COLLISION OF THREE CULTURES IN 1619 VIRGINIA

Ballet Commissioned by Virginia’s 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution, in Partnership with Virginia Arts Festival, is Inspired by the 400th Anniversary of Formative 1619 Virginia Events that Shaped Today’s America

Norfolk, VA (May 9, 2019) – [Virginia’s 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution](#), in partnership with [Virginia Arts Festival](#), commissioned a new ballet from **Dance Theatre of Harlem**, which received its world premiere May 3-5, 2019 at Chrysler Hall in Norfolk, VA. The 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution themes of democracy, diversity and opportunity are reflected in the performance.

The new ballet, titled “Passage,” was created by the female creative team of choreographer Claudia Schreier, an award-winning young choreographer who has drawn attention from American Ballet Theatre, the Vail Dance Festival, and many others; and composer Jessie Montgomery, who created an entirely new score for the piece, and whose music has been hailed as “wildly colorful and exploding with life” (The Washington Post); and under the leadership of Dance Theatre of Harlem Artistic Director Virginia Johnson and Executive Director Anna Glass.

Dance Theatre of Harlem also will perform the same piece at The Kennedy Center, May 28 - June 2.

“We are thrilled to present Dance Theatre of Harlem’s new ballet, Passage – one of the most anticipated Signature Events of 2019 Commemoration. And we are very grateful to Dance Theater of Harlem and our partner, Virginia Arts Festival, for helping us bring this performance to Chrysler Hall,” said Kathy Spangler, Executive Director of 2019 Commemoration. “This live artistic performance offers a tangible way for modern audiences to engage with themes that emerged when African, Virginia Indian and English cultures first collided in 1619 Virginia. This collision of cultures had an indelible influence in shaping 400 years of American history and culture.”

Dance Theatre of Harlem Artistic Director Virginia Johnson hailed the opportunity to create a meaningful work that can express in abstract the fortitude of the human spirit and celebrate the invincible spark within that must prevail.

Added Robert W. Cross, Executive Director and Perry Artistic Director of the Virginia Arts Festival: “Bringing together the extraordinary artistic gifts of this creative team and the legendary Dance Theatre

of Harlem with impact of the 2019 Commemoration enables us to reach audiences today and into the future. We are honored to be a part of bringing these artists' vision to the stage."

The [Dance Theatre of Harlem](#) performances are American Evolution "Signature Events." Virginia's 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution is conducting more than 20 events, programs and educational initiatives with notable Virginia institution partners in 2019 to showcase key occurrences from 1619 Virginia. These events set our nation on a course towards the ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity, and include the first representative legislative assembly in the New World, the arrival of the first recorded Africans to English North America, the recruitment of English women in significant numbers, the first official English Thanksgiving in North America, and the development of the Virginia colony's entrepreneurial and innovative spirit. A full schedule of American Evolution programming can be found [here](#).

About the 2019 Commemoration

The 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution™, highlights events that occurred in Virginia in 1619 that continue to influence America today. Featured programs, events and legacy projects will position Virginia as a leader in education, tourism and economic development. American Evolution™ commemorates the ongoing journey toward the key ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity. Dominion Energy is an American Evolution Founding Partner and Altria Group and TowneBank are Virginia Colony Partners.

About the Virginia Arts Festival

Since 1997, the Virginia Arts Festival has transformed the cultural scene in southeastern Virginia, presenting great performers from around the world to local audiences and making this historic, recreation-rich region a cultural destination for visitors from across the United States and around the world. The Festival has presented numerous U.S. and regional premieres, and regularly commissions new works of music, dance, and theater from some of today's most influential composers, choreographers and playwrights. The Festival's arts education programs reach tens of thousands of area schoolchildren each year through student matinees, in-school performances, artists' residencies, master classes and demonstrations.

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